



*National Council of Jewish Women of Canada,  
Toronto Section*

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**2008 – 2009**

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## CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD'S REPORT – Debbie Wasserman

This year, the Toronto Section Board has met four times as is mandated in our bylaws. A proposal was made to the Board at the Fall meeting, to reduce the number of mandatory Board meetings from four to three per year. The Board agreed that the work of the Board can be accomplished in three meetings per year. This motion was passed by the Board and will be read at the opening meeting in the Fall of 2009 to be approved by the general membership.

“Amendments of the bylaws may be adopted by the 2/3 vote of the members present at a general membership meeting provided one month’s notice has been given and a copy of the proposed amendments and/or revisions have been made available to each member at least ten days before action is to be taken” (Article 18-Amendments and Revisions, Toronto Section Bylaws).

The Board meetings are always an opportunity for all Board members (and any members who wish to attend as observers) to learn about what is going on at the Section level in terms of projects, services and finances. The Board meetings give the members an opportunity to contribute in a very meaningful way to discussions being encouraged to offer insights and comments.

As part of Toronto Section’s ongoing commitment to Strategic Planning, the Board’s assistance was solicited in a brainstorming discussion on ways to increase revenue for the Section. Board members offered positive suggestions which the Strategic Planning Committee will now investigate further. Another plan that the Strategic Planning Committee is investigating is to create a new way to **brand** Toronto Section. A “new look” could encourage community recognition of “Council” as well as facilitate fundraising efforts.

Every two years our bylaws mandate that Toronto Section put forward a new slate for the Toronto Section Board. As the Chair of the Board, it is my responsibility, along with a nominating committee, to build the slate. At the closing meeting on June 10, 2009, the general membership will have the opportunity to meet those nominated and approve the slate. I welcome the new faces on the Board and look forward to working with our Board “team”.

Our Board is a large one, consisting of the Toronto Section Executive, all Portfolio Chairs and Committee Chairs, Branch Chairs and Past Toronto Section Presidents. These people offer a wealth of experience, expertise and enthusiasm. The Board has a critical role to play in shaping and guiding Toronto Section. Through the members’ participation, concerns can be addressed and recommendations can be implemented. In this way, positive change can be achieved.

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT – Paula Frisch**

It has been an interesting, diverse, educational, entertaining, fun-filled, satisfying and productive year here at Toronto Section. At both the Branch and Section levels existing program and services were strengthened and new initiatives explored.

At the Executive Committee of Toronto Section, discussion focused on new possibilities for program development, service initiatives and strategic planning. Evaluation is against the back-drop of consistency with Council's mandate, member interest and acceptability, community needs and Council's ability to successfully undertake a particular initiative.

Council is particularly pleased to welcome a new Branch of young women who live in the downtown area of Toronto. The women joined Council because of our community/service projects as well as the programming and socializing opportunities. They felt it was important to belong to a Jewish organization that was involved with and gave back to the community in which they live. We welcome them and accept the challenge that their membership presents.

Through the year we negotiated the inclusion of the Jewish Women's Cancer Support Group under Council's umbrella. The group provides peer-mentoring support to Jewish women and has functioned for some eight years. The service it provides and the educational goals it espouses are consistent with Council's service, advocacy and education priorities. Both the Group and Council anticipate that this arrangement will provide us both with tremendous benefits and possibilities.

Toronto Section's Executive embarked on a strategic planning exercise that has been and will continue to look at structure and organization, succession, identity and branding, financing and communication. The exercise is a time-consuming, slow, difficult and soul-searching one. Issues and topics are revisited and reconfigured, opportunities explored and weaknesses identified. Council cannot sit on its 112-year historical record. We must meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – 'what we do, how we do and with whom we do'.

Council is not an island unto itself and we feel it important to co-sponsor and partner with other organizations. We have and continue to partner with other community agencies; in some cases as a facilitator (Drive for Dreidels) and in others, as the lead agency (Passover Food Drive). This past year we assumed the responsibility of a supporting sponsor. To this end on May 20<sup>th</sup> we were a supporting sponsor with Jewish Women's International, Jewish Family and Child and the Beth Tzedek Congregation of an evening on ending *violence against women* featuring Jackson Katz. Mr. Katz is one of the most articulate and well respected advocates on this issue in Canada and the United States. He argues that it is a "man problem" and to date, most approaches treat the issue as a women's problem and thus, the lack of success in ending violence against women.

A very big part of Toronto Section is Branch life. Throughout the year, Toronto Section's 26 Branches continued to meet; some seeking more members and others closed because of existing numbers. Increasingly because of speaker expenses or economies of scale,

Branches are getting together for programming purposes or looking to Section to sponsor a joint branch program which preserves the integrity of the Branch's identity, secures funding assistance from Toronto Section and allows other Council members and the community to participate. Our 'program registry' is expanding with quality speakers and diverse and creative ideas.

The Branches continue to challenge Section, not only to keep on top of issues, but also to engage them at a Section level, communicate effectively with them, and identify and connect them with and to larger issues and the larger National organization.

Communication is exceptionally important. Every effort is made to reach our members either through e-mail, regular mail, phone calls and or our website. Each seems to have advantages and disadvantages. We are looking to strengthen the former and minimize the latter. A key element, a constant through the years has been the TORONTO SECTION NEWSLETTER. Our gracious editors have for many years created an informative, attractive, and award-winning publication. They have pushed and prodded us, dealt with interference and tardiness to ensure that we are aware of what will be happening as well as report and highlight events in Council's calendar.

Shortly after last year's Closing General Meeting, Yachad Branch held its amazing annual Garage Sale late in June 2008 and that heralded the start of our equally successful Summer Closet Sale which ran from the end of June until mid-August. Leftovers were distributed to various social agencies.

Although Branches did begin to meet in late August and early September, Section held its Opening General Meeting on September 18, 2009 featuring Judie Oron, speaking about the rescue and adoption of her daughters from Ethiopia and a performance of the KIDS ON THE BLOCK puppeteers. As part of Holocaust Education week, Council hosted a dynamic Professor Doris Bergen speaking on "Mothers and Daughters of the Holocaust". A very special membership outreach program in November featured Dr. Kenny Handelman who "Unwrapped the Gift of ADD and ADHD" – an outstanding evening which attracted predominantly young people, both male and female and many non-members.

Toronto Section, in December, again partnered with Jewish Family and Child for the Chanukah Toy Drive, "Drive For Dreidels" which benefited children within the GTA Jewish Community. There were significant spill over benefits to the Salvation Army, the CHUM Christmas Wish campaign and the Native Child and Family Service. The year 2008 closed out with our joint Chanukah party with the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society.

January continued to storm every night there was a Toronto Section program, but we persevered. Harriet Morris gave a brilliant review of A Pigeon and A Boy by M. Shalev and in March members and guests shook, rattled and jiggled their way through a Belly Dancing class. Our Purim Mishloach Manot cards designed and organized by Dinah Branch were very successful and this campaign morphed beautifully into our Passover Food Drive, now in its 26<sup>th</sup> year.

Toronto Section believes that celebrating Passover should not be a privilege and seeks to ensure that all those in need celebrate the holiday with dignity. The Passover Food Drive about to begin its 27<sup>th</sup> year, is a major project of Council, some ten months in the planning. The entire project was undertaken on a volunteer basis. Close to 3000 boxes are packed by students from the Jewish Day Schools, after school programs and community and synagogue groups. These boxes were delivered on Sunday March 29, 2009 by both Council members and members of the community. Although food was donated through the schools, synagogues and selected stores, 85-90% of the food was purchased (wholesale) with funds donated by Council members individually, by Branches, individual donations, a number of corporate donations and several community organizations and synagogues. Council willingly takes the lead on this project, but recognizes and appreciates the support and participation of the community as a whole.

April featured Corey Keeble, Curator of Antiquities at the ROM speaking on the “Great Synagogues of Europe” and closed with Salsa Dancing lessons to a small, but dedicated and talented group.

For the first time in many years Toronto Section held an IFCA/ALUMA fundraiser. A very successful Brunch held May 3, 2009, was attended by some 125 people and featured Ralph Benmergui and his film “My Israel –Your Israel”. ALUMA is Council’s Israel project and the money raised is desperately needed by ALUMA to continue to meet the demand for family counselling services in which it specializes and is recognized throughout Israel.

Under the auspices of the Membership Portfolio, a most informative evening on Autism was held in mid-May with Abbie Solish who covered, not only the basics, but also brought us up-to-date on recent developments and thinking. Also in May, under the excellent tutelage of Jamie Zeppa, a group of Council members began to learn the art of memoir writing.

Council’s projects and programs require financial resources and undertaking fundraising events can be a little daunting. To that end, Toronto Section is very appreciative of the new fundraising initiatives of Orah Branch which held a most successful “Gold Party” fundraiser and Thornhill Study which held a wonderful Card and Game Day that filled the auditorium.

Weekly and bi-weekly programs and projects have continued all the while. Our Women’s Support Network met bi-monthly on Wednesday mornings. Mahjong is played every Wednesday afternoon. Our two quilting groups meet Wednesday afternoons and Thursday evenings, creating the most amazing hand-sewn quilts that are then gifted to individuals touched by cancer. The Susan Zajdner and Fay Mosoff Seniors’ Lunch and Learn programs attracted an appreciative crowd on a bi-monthly basis with nutritious lunches and high quality and diverse programming. The Quilters are working on a second quilt for Council House that in my mind, so closely reflects their skills, talent, dedication, caring, comfort and thoughtfulness.

Our Simcha Basket Program continues all year and it very often is of critical importance to our 'Backpack', holiday celebration projects as well as programs affecting children and women in disadvantaged situations.

Planning for 2009/10 has already begun. A Branch Chair meeting is scheduled for June 15, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. The Just-For-Me Backpacks have arrived and Dinah Branch has already begun to search out the goods for stuffing at the mid-summer mark. Our Opening General Meeting is scheduled for September 14, 2009 with keynote speaker Dr. Guy Proulx, a noted medical specialist and researcher on aging and in particular, the benchmarks that indicate the early onset of dementia.

Recognizing that more women are interested in quality programming during the day, we are experimenting with three afternoon programs, the last Tuesday in September, October and November: "In the Studios of Rembrandt and Vermeer", "in the Studios of Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollack" and "the Queens of Egypt".

I sincerely thank all those who have made this past year such a good one for Council and who have afforded me the opportunity to serve as your President. To my Executive, many, many thanks for your support, your guidance, your enthusiasm and your initiative. I know how hard you have all worked, the hours you have spent and of your passion and belief in Council. My thanks and sincere appreciation goes to all the Project and Program Chairpersons and their committees who so ably carried out their responsibilities and overcame whatever challenges were presented to them. To Council's staff, Shirlee Aronson, Lisa Ash, Naomi Bernard and Andreas Terriminy, thank you for always getting the job done, for your patience and for always caring.

Toronto Section has achieved much in its 112 years. It has done so because its members have believed in what NCJWC stands for and for whom. Individually and collectively, we have contributed our time, our energy and resources to meet challenges and to create and satisfy. We have the wisdom, capability, strength and resourcefulness to meet the needs, the challenges, the ideas and the opportunities that are still there for us to do something about. Let us as Council members continue to make a difference.

### **Strategic Planning – Marcie Weinman**

Strategic Planning is always a long and painstaking process. This holds true for an organization such as National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, Toronto Section, now in its 112th year. The Strategic Planning Committee has been meeting for several years. Progress has been slow but steady. This year, a subcommittee was struck to devise a method of branding Toronto Section to attract a younger demographic and to visually represent Toronto Section and its endeavors.

All of Toronto Section initiatives were categorized into subsections such as community service, connecting with the community, helping, caring and giving. Brainstorming resulted in the image of a helping hand.

The resulting concept highlights the Toronto Section initiative of **Connecting with the Community** through 5-fold means represented by the five fingers of a hand:

- Health Awareness and Support
- Easing Child Poverty
- Learning Opportunities
- Passover Food Drive
- Seniors' Enrichment

The above list results in the acronym "**HELPS**".

It was suggested that the hand together with the acronym be the Toronto Section brand to appear on all Toronto Section communications. Meetings are to be held with younger branches to elicit their comments and reactions to the suggested branding.

Part of the strategic plan involves the use of technology such as facebook, twitter and an updated website in order to reach and communicate with a younger demographic as well as to fundraise in more effective ways.

The Strategic Planning Committee anticipates that the coming year will produce a definitive strategic plan culminating in the introduction of various aspects of the plan to Toronto Section operations.

### **ADVOCACY PORTFOLIO – LEONA ELIGBERG**

Advocacy is one of the strongest elements that motivates and guides the actions and activities of National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, Toronto Section. We speak out against injustice, praise or censor the decisions of government at all levels, and provide a voice for the disadvantaged or disenfranchised who may not have a voice of their own.

The projects we undertake and support mirror our concern for equality and acceptance for all.

We are about to undertake a campaign of collecting signatures on petitions demanding action on behalf of women and children who live in poverty and some even below the poverty line. We hope to join with Federation UJA to present our petitions to government representatives at all levels.

I would like to throw out a different idea – a challenge, if you will – to all our Branches. Can you find a small area of concern in your “neighbourhood” which can be a focus for advocacy (support or help) for your Branch. If feasible, these may also be undertaken by other Branches and by Toronto Section. I would be happy to discuss your ideas and help you to implement a plan of action for your group or for Toronto Section. Please share your thoughts and ideas with me before you proceed.

In the year ahead, Karen Fenwick and I will be working together on the Advocacy Portfolio. With your input and participation, we hope to continue to make a difference.

### **BATHURST/ PRINCE CHARLES – BARBARA GREENGLASS**

Bathurst/Prince Charles, Toronto Section's integrated housing building, continues to thrive. As you can see by this report, we have been able to provide our tenants with much more than shelter.

Residents look forward to the Bathurst/ Prince Charles annual barbeque which will take place on June 25<sup>th</sup>. This event is sponsored by Toronto Section and is always well attended.

Tenants also were grateful for the Passover Food Drive boxes that allowed them to celebrate Passover with dignity.

Here is a list of activities that are enjoyed by our residents throughout the year:

1. The September Party (BBQ)
2. Halloween Party(hosted by the Seniors' Group)
3. Orah Branch Chanukah Party
4. Adult Holiday Party in December
5. Bingo and New Years Party
6. "Council 17" Tea
7. Yachad Branch Purim Party
8. Free Tax Return Clinic sponsored by Chartered Accountants of Ontario
9. Exercise Programs two times a week
10. Chair Yoga – the newest program
11. Bingo held every other Monday
12. Seniors' Group meets once a week
13. Outings throughout the year

A special thanks to all the Branches who participated in those events.

We appreciate the efforts of the staff at Bathurst/Prince Charles. Alan Alexander manages our facility with great expertise and care beyond his job description. Maureen Alexander and Ed Hickey are always going the extra mile to make sure our tenant's needs are met. Our building has maintained an excellent occupancy rate I'm sure due to our staff's diligence.

A special thank you to all the Board Members of Bathurst Prince Charles. In the four years that I have been Chair of the Board, we have always had a quorum. Thank you for your support.

## **COMMUNICATIONS PORTFOLIO**

### **Newsletter - Paula Epstein, Diane Shiffman, Ruth Silver**

We published three newsletters this year to keep Council members informed of activities, programs and life cycle events from Toronto Section. We had a long and interesting number of years as your Newsletter Editors and it's now time for us to "pass the torch". We want to wish Eva Karpati much success in continuing to keep Council members in the know. With your help, she will be able to continue to make our newsletter relevant and informative for all to read.

## **EDUCATIONAL PORTFOLIO – LINDA STEINBERG**

An exciting range of programs was successfully planned with the input of several Council members from different Branches as part of Joint Branch Programming. Belly dancing and Salsa dancing offered lighter fare; Harriet Morris's discussion of the book [A Pigeon and a Boy](#) was as captivating as the book itself; 'The Great Synagogues of Europe' presented by Corey Keeble, curator at the ROM and hosted by Shalom Branch, was informative and well presented.

Responding to requests for daytime programming, a very successful Memoir Writing Workshop was held in May. Participants were very pleased with their learning experience and most comfortable with Jamie Zeppa's teaching methods.

Dr. Guy Proulx, Director of the Department of Psychology at Baycrest is the keynote speaker at our Opening Meeting September 14<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Proulx's presentation on 'Memory and Aging' will be both entertaining and very informative.

Plans for the Fall will also include three daytime programs, two on art appreciation and one on the Queens of Egypt. We are so fortunate to have such fabulous speakers with great expertise.

All Committees and their Chairs under this portfolio have been very busy on behalf of Council members.

### **Holocaust Education – Florene Moskovitz**

On Saturday November 8th, 2008, NCJWC-TS sponsored a Holocaust Education Program. Featured speaker was Professor Doris Bergen, the Scholar-In-Residence for Holocaust Education Week. The topic which she addressed was "Mothers and Daughters During The Holocaust". With the use of books that she has written as a result of her in-depth research, and video clips, Professor Bergen gave a most insightful and riveting talk. A pin could be heard in the room as the stories of the sacrifices of mothers to save their daughters were told. The program was very successful, and we look forward to continuing our wonderful relationship with the Holocaust Education Committee next year.

### *The Susan Zajdner and The Fay Mosoff Seniors' Lunch & Learn Programs*

#### **Enrichment Program for Seniors – Gita Arnold and Sheila Freeman**

Lunch and Learn Programs for Seniors 2008 – 2009 proved to be very successful judging by the turnout of individuals from the general community as well as Council members. Attendance averaged around 60 persons. Their response and appreciation was most enthusiastic. The goal for programming has always been to provide a variety of entertaining performers as well as educational speakers all of a high quality and at a reasonable cost. The entertainers have included The Entertainers of the Wagman Center, York Jazz Band, Rudy Mayes & Ester Finocchiaro, Adam Timoon, Peter Marino, and Rene Barda. Educational speakers this year included Diana Mingail, Susan Jackson, Marvin Green and Rabbi Michael Dolgin. The final program for this year was held June 9, 2008 to a sold-out audience. Many thanks to the volunteers who do the shopping, food preparation, serving and cleaning up. They are the best. Many thanks to the office staff for their help and caring.

#### **Jewish Genetics and Testing – Lorraine Berk**

**Breaking News!** We have just received approval from the Hospital for Sick Children to do another screening sometime next year. This screening will be at the high school level. Negotiations are now under way as to location and dates.

A committee will have to be formed for all the planning that has to be done. Please let the office know if you would like to work on the Jewish Genetic Awareness Committee and I will contact you ASAP.

Our ongoing ad campaign in the CJN is continuing and I am happy to report that our partners in this endeavour (organizations for the Jewish Genetic Diseases) have all been contributing financially to this ad campaign.

We are looking to spread the awareness through avenues such as **Facebook** and **Twitter** and would welcome any “techies” to our committee.

**Our main objective is to have the awareness of being screened for Jewish Genetic diseases an automatic for every Jewish couple about to get married or of child bearing age.**

#### **FINANCIAL PORTFOLIO – MARCIE WEINMAN**

Preliminary Financial Statements from our auditors for the 2008/09 fiscal year will not be available until after the year end. Therefore, it is not possible to deliver a definitive statement of Toronto Section's finances at this point. However, certain indicators allow me to report on trends throughout the year.

Toronto Section revenues have fallen below projections for the year in general. This can be accounted for, in part, by the world wide economic downturn causing individual and corporate donors to more circumspect in their charitable giving. At the same time, Toronto Section did not hold a major fundraiser this year as trends have indicated that costs of tickets would be difficult to increase in order to keep in line with higher costs of speakers/entertainment, food and other fundraising expenditures, as would the challenge of soliciting sponsorships and advertising. However, Toronto Section is currently planning to hold several smaller fundraisers throughout the 2009 - 2010 year which will help to increase Toronto Section revenues for the coming year.

Serviette sales are also down this year. All existing serviettes have been sold. New strategies for sales will be planned by our new Serviette Chairs and we anticipate that sales will return to greater levels.

The Donor campaign was also significantly lower this year due to reasons beyond our control; among them being the general economic downturn. To ensure an early start to the Donor campaign for the coming fiscal year, Donor requests are included in this year's Membership Dues Statements.

On a high note, branch fundraising was up this year thanks to some new branch initiatives and to some excellent tried and true fundraising efforts by other branches. Thank you to all Toronto Section branches for their very much appreciated fundraising efforts and particularly to those branches that worked so hard to run very successful fundraising events. The next branch fundraiser for this fiscal year will be the Garage Sale run by Yachad branch on June 28, 2009.

A very successful IFCA/ALUMA Brunch held on May 3, in support of the Israel Family Counselling Association in Israel was instrumental in ensuring that Toronto Section achieved and exceeded its IFCA commitment for the 2008-2009 year. Thanks go out to the IFCA Brunch Committee for its hard work and success.

Toronto Section was successful in securing government and organizational grants this year.

Section expenditures were also lower than projected this year. Care was taken by Portfolio Chairs to ensure that budgetary allotments were not exceeded. As well, volunteers and staff were careful to ensure that only necessary expenditures were requested. With no major expenditures this year, expenses were also kept in line. It is important to mention that as Toronto Section members become cognizant of the fiscal challenges and budgetary restraints of the Section, their support of Council initiatives and fundraising endeavors will ensure that we meet and exceed our expectations and continue to fulfill our role in making the lives of so many in the community more meaningful.

I would like to extend my thanks to Council members for your support and, particularly, to the Executive and Board for all of their efforts and valuable feedback.

Thank you, especially, to Shirlee Aronson, our bookkeeper and comptroller. Her wisdom, care and commitment to Toronto Section and her unchallenged knowledge about all things Council, make her a true treasure. Without Shirlee, it would be impossible to carry out the position of Treasurer.

### **IFCA / Aluma – Hazel Wayne**

A Fundraiser Brunch was held for a good cause!

For more than 35 years, National Council of Jewish Women of Canada (NCJWC), has been the sole, Canadian fundraiser for the Israel Family Counselling Association (IFCA) that operates out of Tel-Aviv.

IFCA/ALUMA is the only service of its type in Israel and is completely non-profit. IFCA's work deals with troubled families, sexual abuse, bereavement and grief counselling, isolation and immigration problems amongst a myriad of other services. Their heavily demanded services are referred to clients by the Israeli government, rabbinate, courts and other professional bodies.

We are very proud of our commitment to IFCA/Aluma, and of the exceptional work that is provided by its dedicated volunteers. The psychological effects of living in a war zone require practical, useful support and strategies for coping. IFCA/Aluma is there to help. Without IFCA/Aluma there would be a huge gap in the delicate fabric of Israeli life, which would be an unspeakable loss of support for those families in need.

IFCA/Aluma is always in need of assistance and hosting an event was NCJWC-TS's way of providing some much needed financial support.

This year, on Sunday May 3<sup>rd</sup>, a brunch fundraiser 'My Israel- Your Israel' was held at the NCJWC-Toronto Section's Head Office, 4700 Bathurst Street in Toronto. The brunch was a huge success. Over 125 guests attended and were musically entertained by Mickey Lewin as they enjoyed a delicious formal sit down meal in a beautiful tulip-filled room.

A shortened version of the intriguing and thought-provoking 5-part TV Mini-Series 'My Israel' (originally aired on Vision TV in September 2008) by Ralph Benmergui was shown, followed by a question and answer period. Mr. Benmergui is a Veteran Broadcaster, Moderator and host of 'Benmergui in the Morning' on Jazz FM91.

Patrons also enjoyed a raffle, the grand prize being a flight for three passengers over the City of Toronto. A big thank you goes out to all the donors and sponsors for their very generous support.

NCJWC-Toronto Section hopes to make the IFCA/Aluma Fundraiser an annual occurrence and looks forward to hosting next year's event.

### **Summer Closet Sale – Phyllis Dubin**

The 12th Annual Summer Closet Sale ran from June 24 to August 26, 2008 in the auditorium of Council House on Tuesday mornings from 9-1. Its reputation for quality merchandise made it a destination sale for bargain hunters. Prior to the final dispatch of all items, various community and social service agencies, shelters etc. were invited to come and take whichever items they could use at no charge. The sale is staffed by volunteers and profits are used to fund Council projects and programs. The Summer Closet Sale will continue in 2009 beginning Tuesday, June 30th to August 9th. DONATIONS IN GOOD CONDITION ARE WELCOME and will be accepted until the end of July 2009.

### **MEMBERSHIP – DAHLIA RUSINEK & ELKIE HANDELMAN**

Membership placements were ably performed by Bari Feld. She contacted people who had phoned the Section office indicating that they were interested in joining. After interviewing them to find out their age, location and interests, she attempted to place them in the most appropriate Branch. Unfortunately, most of our Branches are “closed” or those that were “open” were not the same age range as the prospective members. It was not possible to form a new Branch to accommodate these prospective members because there were either too few for a new Branch and/or they were of disparate ages or interest. At a meeting of the Board of Directors, Bari suggested that Branches consider opening up their membership.

On a positive note, we have a new Branch. A group of young women attracted by our mandate and record of service and action joined Council this year. We welcome them and are delighted to have them on board.

We appreciate Bari Feld’s hard work and thank her for her effort and involvement.

Two evenings were planned to attract prospective new members into Council House and to interest them in joining. In an attempt to attract younger women, the topic of one evening was ADHD and the second evening’s topic was on Autism. The ADHD meeting was well attended in spite of a very early snow storm (in November). Attendees received an information package and an application to join Council. Further emails, questionnaires asking that they suggest topics of interest to them and invitations to Council events were also forwarded to them. The Autism meeting was not as well attended. Both speakers were excellent.

We would like to thank the Executive for their advice and support and the office staff for all their help.

## **SERVICE PORTFOLIO – EMMY GERSHON**

### **Council Awareness Players – Phyllis Disenhouse**

We would like to thank the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada for sponsoring us.

This last year our senior volunteer group enjoyed performing our informative comic short plays in front of a number of older adult groups in Toronto. Our messages about healthy eating and the importance of fire safety were well received. We would like to thank Toronto Fire Services for its much-needed assistance in the fire safety performances.

We also performed our plays about elder abuse in front of student and adult groups in Toronto.

Fran Abelson, Joan Matchett, Sheila Zane and Phyllis Disenhouse went to Temiskaming in Northern Ontario at the invitation of The First Nation community there. Over 100 people from all over Northern Ontario attended and we had a warm and most interested response to and discussion about the content of our elder abuse plays.

We would like to thank our wonderful volunteer performers who are there with a smile, rain or shine and especially Sheila Zane, our guiding spirit.

### **Drive for Dreidels – Gloria Hershenfield and Cheryl Hochman**

This year we again partnered with Jewish Family and Child for the annual Chanukah Toy Drive.

The Drive for Dreidels was an overwhelming success. The donations from the community and our membership surpassed our expectations.

This year we were also joined by The Revera group including seniors from Terrace Gardens Retirement Residence, Forest Hill Place Retirement Residence and Pine Villa Retirement Residence.

Each child received at least three items, consisting of either toys, games, books, or for the older children, gift certificates. After we fulfilled our wish lists, we were pleased to be able to donate surplus toys to JIAS, Just a Second Shop, “Just for Me” Backpack Project and Toy Mountain, Salvation Army and many others.

Thank you to all volunteers for donating and sorting toys.

### **Food For Learning – Marcy Fish**

I am delighted to report that we have had a wonderful year at Pineway Public School. Our enrolment has reached over 125 students. We are committed to serving healthy snacks which the children receive at recess time. It has recently come to our attention

that many students are still arriving at school without breakfast. As tests have shown, without proper nutrition a child cannot learn. That is why our program is so vital at this school. The staff has shown their appreciation by giving a tea last week at which time each volunteer was given a diploma for their efforts and the students themselves have made us beautiful thank you notes. We look forward to another year in September 2009 which will be our eighth year at Pineway Public School.

### **“Just for Me” Backpack Project – Hayley Morris and Bonnie Wells**

One of Council’s service projects that Council helps to provide the community with is the “Just for Me” Backpack Project that supplies 200 children in shelters and foster care homes with backpacks filled with school supplies, books and toys for the school year as needed. These back packs are distributed in late August by Jewish Family and Child to boys and girls ages 4-12. Last year the Dinah Branch took over this project for the first time and the group had a lot of enthusiasm and put great effort in making these bags for the children who received them. Many of the Dinah Branch members helped in various ways from obtaining donations, shopping, sorting and packing the bags. We look forward to another great effort from the Dinah Branch again in August 2009.

### **Kids on the Block (KOB) – Eveline Berger**

It is hard to believe that another year has come and gone. We have had a fantastic year! This year we welcomed our staff person, Kirsten Sixt. Kirsten has an extensive background in community leadership roles. She has brought with her incredible energy and what a year it has been! We began the year with a performance at NCJWC-TS’ opening meeting. Many of the current members were seeing KOB for the first time and were thrilled to see that Council supports KOB as an outreach program of NCJWC-TS. For the school year 2008- 2009 we visited over sixty schools and reached more than 18,000 kids with our disability awareness educational message. We had a fabulous fundraising event on June 1<sup>st</sup> in conjunction with The Second City. It was an evening filled with fun and laughter to celebrate our volunteers’ commitment to our program and the many years that Kids on the Block has been teaching acceptance through puppetry!

As we look forward to next year, 2009-2010 please remember that we are always looking for volunteer puppeteers! If anyone is interested in being apart of our program please call 416 964-9095 and ask for Judi or Kirsten.

Thank you to all Council members for your ongoing and strong support of this wonderful program!

### **Outreach – Ena Cord**

On Wednesday December 17, 2008 the auditorium was transformed from a depository of toys to a room filled with the spirit and joy of Chanukah. White tablecloths and blue and white balloon centerpieces adorned the room. Each table was filled with traditional Chanukah foods including dreidels, cookies, donuts and latkes. The children were busy with arts and crafts while the parents made connections with other parents who had

recently arrived in Canada. The candles were lit as the children recited the brachot followed by Maoz Tsur. Yitzhak Argamon entertained with many favorite Chanukah and Israeli songs, while the children and parents sang along. And of course, Dudu the Clown, who has brought laughter and fun to our Chanukah party for many years. He is loved by all generations! The children left with loot bags filled with toys, chocolate gelt, a dreidel and smiling faces.

The success of the evening is dependent on many factors. It has been a pleasure working with the committee at JIAS and a friendship has been established over the years of planning these events. The volunteers from the individual branches are a most valuable asset to the success of the evening. Stuffing loot bags, setting up the room, presenting the food and cleaning up are some of the duties that were so ably handled by the volunteers. Individual and Branch contributions in the form of financial donations, baked goods and toys are extremely valuable to the funding of this event. I deeply thank everyone who played a role in making this event fun and rewarding for all of those in attendance. I'm looking forward to next year!

### **Passover Food Drive –Karen Fenwick and Debbie Wasserman**

The 2009 Passover Food Drive faced greater challenges this year in light of the failing economy and 35% increase in the cost of food. We are happy to report that an increase in the number of corporate sponsors, and community donations helped cover this shortfall. Up to 3000 boxes were packed. The majority of these boxes were delivered to the recipients on Delivery Day, Sunday, March 29, 2009, and the remaining boxes were picked up by agencies.

We welcome new sponsors: Carlo's nofrills, The Cortel Group, The Revera Group which include Forest Hill Place, Pine Villa and Terrace Gardens, and The Gerald Schwartz-Heather Reisman Foundation.

Store participation as food depots was again successful. The addition of the Revera Group of senior residences gave an opportunity for these seniors to participate in the collection of food and running bingos to raise funds. All participating stores will be asked back and given the opportunity to become corporate sponsors if they are not sponsors already. The virtual coupons at Sobeys are a great success and raised thousands of dollars for the project.

This year there was a conflict of the Drive with March break. Although there were fewer afternoon schools participating, we had the same number of packing groups in total. New groups involved included L'Chaim Cancer Support Group, G.R.O.W. and a Hadassah branch.

We wish to thank our devoted committee, the many Council volunteers who donate their time and money, and the wonderful support from the Toronto Jewish community. We would like to acknowledge the hard-working staff of Council: Shirlee Aronson, Lisa Ash, Naomi Bernard, and Andreas Terriminy. Work has already started on the 2010 Passover Food Drive and we look forward to meeting the challenges ahead!

### **Reading Angels – Marcy Fish**

It is the right of every child to experience daily exposure to learning situations. Ample opportunity must be provided to master the skills of reading and writing. Our volunteers help students in the primary grades to become proficient in these skills, thus building their self-esteem. Each student receives individual attention supervised by a staff member. Thank you to all of our "ANGELS." You have truly earned you HALOS. We are proud of this project which has existed for several years in various schools. The future of our society depends upon educating young people, the lack of which results in poverty and an increase in the crime rate. If you are interested in learning more about this project please call Council and ask for Marcy Fish.

### **Simcha Baskets – Lisa Ash**

The Simcha Basket program is an initiative aimed at helping those less fortunate in our community and to date, this project has proven to be quite successful! In 2008, a total of 20 families used this idea of Simcha Baskets for centrepieces.

If you or anyone that you know aren't familiar with "Simcha Baskets", here is what this project involves.

Instead of flowers adorning your table as a centrepiece, you and your child who is being Bar/Bat Mitzvahed, can work together to create a delightful, meaningful basket full of gifts that would light up any child's eyes, or if you rather, you can have the baskets professionally made. These baskets may also be used at baby namings or any simcha. All of these baskets will be donated to one of our service programs and NCJWC-TS will issue a tax receipt for the value of the contents. A card is attached which reads:

“Our family shares the joy of this occasion  
by donating these Simcha Baskets  
to those in our community.  
This is a project of  
National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, Toronto Section”

Participation in our “Simcha Basket” project is an opportunity to bring another element of meaning to your special occasion...not only will they add beauty and a topic of interest to your simcha table, the basket will also provide a mitzvah to someone else!

For further information, please call Lisa Ash at Council House (416) 633-5100 or email [reception@ncjwc-ts.org](mailto:reception@ncjwc-ts.org).

### **The Toronto Jewish Quilting Project – Eva Karpati**

The Toronto Jewish Quilting Project was formed over five years ago and has been happily housed at Council House for the last three years. Our group of 30 volunteers come together Wednesday afternoons at 1:30 – 3:30 pm and Thursday evenings at 7:00 –

9:00 pm, to lovingly hand sew 100% cotton lap quilts that are gifted to comfort people dealing with cancer. To date 80 quilts have been gifted from 90 completed. We welcome all interested in quilting, no previous experience required. At The Toronto Jewish Quilting Project we teach, we learn, we sew, and we gab. At the May 2009, Toronto Section Board Meeting, the Quilting Group announced it will be gifting a very special quilt to Toronto Section. Come join us.

### **Women's Support Network – Rachel Ornoy**

Women's Support Network is a group dedicated to supporting and helping each other out while having fun. Discussion of topics and concerns relevant to the women form the basis of their meetings. Through innovative programming, facilitator Rachel Ornoy maintains interest and keeps meetings fresh and current. In addition to guest speakers, birthdays and holidays are celebrated, videos are viewed and discussed, arts and crafts projects are undertaken, pot luck lunches are organized, and care baskets for shelters are prepared when needed as well as gift baskets for special events.

### **National Board of Directors Meeting, April 24 –26, 2009 – Paula Frisch**

The Annual Meeting was held in Vancouver with 23 individuals from Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver in attendance over time. There were no representatives from Montreal; From Toronto - Roz Fine, Barbara Greenglass and Paula Frisch. Dianne Glass, the National President, presided. Our Vancouver hostesses were warm, wonderful, thoughtful and equal to if not better than the Olympic committee (no deficit, everything on time).

It was a full, thought provoking and critical meeting which addressed the current situation and future prospects and options of the National organization and by default those of the constituent sections.

The meeting began with a discussion of the relationship between the Sections and the National organization including matters of financial and corporate support, expectations, strengths and weaknesses.

Being part of a National organization gave a sense of legitimacy, credibility, power and influence, number, a broader perspective on issues, national vs. local, and connections with other cities and regions, vis-a vis issues, goals, projects and opportunities.

It was recognized that the National organization facilitated communication between the Sections and the opportunities for exchange that that provided, as well as links to regional and international levels. It was felt however, that we needed to strengthen, re-ignite our image, redesign our logo and website, strengthen and increase communication between the sections, encourage young leadership, establish national priorities and increase individual connections with Council.

While it was appreciated that to a limited extent, the Sections fund the National organization; in reality the Sections give substance to what Council stands for and does.

From a National perspective, it is hoped that the Sections will provide it with additional funding, either directly or indirectly, emphasize the NATIONAL aspect in its PR material and support National initiatives.

Largely, in response to financing issues and difficulties, the question 'what would happen if National ceased to exist' was posed. It was acknowledged that in the short term not much, in the longer term a great deal. In addition to various possible legal technicalities re name, registration, and funding opportunities, there would be implications for communications, contacts, priorities, issues, projects, funding and service opportunities, credentials etc.

In response to membership development, a Council Awareness Month is being planned for November 2009. Each Section will plan a special event/program which will be highlighted on a single poster/PR material that will be distributed across Canada.

A proposed revised logo was presented to the Board and sent back by the Board for further redesign.

NCJWC signed on to Campaign 2000. A presentation by representatives from First Call, a BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition informed Board members of Canada's dismal record with record to child poverty to date how government actions will do little to impact positively on child and family poverty.

Dianne Glass reported that NCJWC-Montreal had not submitted dues nor contributed its IFCA money for several years. Very often calls to the Montreal office were not returned. There is speculation that many Montreal members have no idea what is going on.

On the matter of funding the National organization, Board members were made aware of just how critical is the situation. Section presidents were unwilling to commit their members to increased National dues. In the short term it was felt that a special endowment campaign that had been initiated in September 2008 should continue and that NCJWC apply for grants to underwrite some of our initiatives and programs. The possibility of a loan from the International organization was to be explored. It was recognized that it is unrealistic to expect a corporation to underwrite our operational expenses, but it was reasonable to ask them to help fund projects and services.

The matter of the number of member financial solicitations was raised and that a need to rationalize them was recognized.

An extensive report by Marion Poliakoff on IFCA/ALUMA was presented followed, by a extensive discussion of National's IFCA campaign mailing. Because the Sections have their respective IFCA/ALUMA events at different times of the year and because different people in some cases respond to the different campaigns, for the time being National and Section campaigns/events will continue and will regrettably overlap to some extent.

National's 2009 Second Century Campaign will be sent out in August 2009.

National's 2008 IFCA/ALUMA Campaign will be sent to Toronto and Vancouver in July 2008.

National's 2009 IFCA/ALUMA Campaign will be sent to all Sections in December 2009.

The Young Leadership group that met during the meeting presented a dynamic report about Council. Barbara Greenglass and Roz Fine will present their comments and suggestions.

It was suggested that the Board meet only once a year, rather than its current practice of twice in deference to budget considerations.

The next meeting in will be held in Edmonton in October 2009.

### **AVIVA BRANCH – Anne Cooper & Sarah Tobe**

Aviva Branch has been in existence for over 30 years and has had many changes during that period. At the present time it has evolved into a Current Events Program. Discussions are held on issues that are currently in the limelight. Everyone has a chance to voice their opinion in an amicable atmosphere and a good time is had by all. We are always interested in expanding and a few new members have joined our group this year.

### **CENTENNIAL BRANCH – Ellen Erenberg**

Our program consists of reading books, discussing the content and learning about the author. Our resource person Penny Rose will be retiring this year after being with us for fifteen years. We will be assisted next year by Charlotte Stein, a most knowledgeable person who runs her own book store. We were fortunate to have two very interesting speakers this year; Aviva Basman spoke to us about her job in assisting women who are applying for refugee status in Canada. We also had a guest who gave a demonstration on Kosher Yoga. We look forward to our Fall program which will include a personal appearance by author Joseph Kertes who has just received the Canadian Jewish Book Award for his book Gratitude.

### **DINAH BRANCH – Hayley Morris & Bonnie Wells**

This year has been very exciting so far for the members of Dinah Branch and L'Chaim Branch. In September it was agreed to merge the two groups into one larger Dinah Branch and the decision has proved to be an excellent one!! Among many interesting and well attended programs, three programs are worth noting. The first was our 5<sup>th</sup> annual stuffing of backpacks for Ve' Ahavta's Homeless initiative. The second was our annual "Chinese Auction" which had been a starring feature of the L'Chaim Branch's programs. Unanimously renamed the "L'Chaim Auction", all participants used their wisdom and guile to purchase two gifts for no more than \$10 each (we love sales and a good bargain!!!!). These items were enticingly wrapped and brought to the auction where we then bid on them, with the guidance of our very own experienced, amusing and talented auctioneer (Lori Goodfield). We had a thoroughly enjoyable evening! In fact we made \$525 from this event, of which all was given directly to Council. The third successful program was the selling of the Purim Cards, which brought \$1000 for Council. We look forward to many more successful events in the upcoming year.

### **KADIMA BRANCH – Diana Shiffman**

Kadima Branch was started in 1973 out of a need for young mothers to socialize with women their own age. We still have some original members who are now grandmothers. We have 12 members in our Branch.

Our opening meeting is a social get together where we get caught up on summer happenings. This year our programs included a discussion on the "Jews of Iraq" with Diana Mingail and we partnered with another branch for a book review on The Book Thief lead by Marilyn Herbert.

We continue to sell Entertainment Books and a few of our members are "Reading Angels" at Flemingdon Public School.

### **NOVA STUDY – Bari Feld**

Nova Study Group is our name  
Belonging to Council is our claim to fame.  
Education, Service, fun and games  
And add Fundraising to our aims.

This year, we had programmes galore  
Going for lunch or dinner before.  
A walking tour of Cabbagetown  
The Jewish Film Festival of great reknown.

We showed a movie one night in October  
Gave money to Council when it was over.  
Helped out at Chanukah, Passover, too  
It feels good to do what we can do.

At the Forensic Center we learned a lot  
About fingerprinting and how crooks are caught.  
At the Vishnu Temple we all took part  
Book reviews, plays and movies to make us smart.

Indian vegetarian cooking one week  
Art appreciation, learned some different technique.  
Council House programmes with others to meet  
Supporting Toronto Section, important and neat.

Our ladies are busy and active and fun  
And when we are asked, we get things done.  
A brand new season coming this Fall  
Nova is planning more special events, y'all.

### **ORAH BRANCH – Hazel Wayne**

As I look back over the past months, I realize ORAH has had very interesting and varied programming. We enjoyed a personal story by Tomas Schramek of the National Ballet of Canada. Stephen Pearl, a Financial Advisor gave us an interesting view of the current economic climate. We also had a very lively two-part 'Torah & the Environment' discussion with Rabbi Yossi Sapirman, who, as always, was very entertaining. A devious peek inside the criminal mind was delivered by former RCMP Officer Fran Salzman on 'Identity Theft'.

Once again, Orah enjoyed hosting the annual Bathurst Prince Charles Chanukah Party – a treat for the guests and an even bigger treat for our group. The joy this much-awaited event provides is extremely rewarding.

With Pesach looming and everything tasting like Matzah, we decided to have a Passover Recipe Swap. We had a very enjoyable exchange and I am sure our families really appreciated the change and variety the different recipes had to offer.

I would be remiss if I didn't congratulate Debbie Wasserman & Karen Fenwick for the amazing job they did with the Passover Food Drive. Their dedication and hard work is inspirational to all of us.

A Gold party held a few weeks ago was extremely successful and profitable. We were amazed at just how much money odd and unwanted jewellery can bring in.

We also took in the Film Festival and the show 'Tuesdays with Morrie'.

Finally, we were honoured to have Marina Nemat – Author of Prisoner of Tehran as a guest speaker. The story is based on Ms. Nemat's true experience, and relates how in 1982 at age 16, she was arrested on false charges by Iranian Revolutionary Guards and tortured in Tehran's notorious Evin prison. We found her story very powerful, riveting and extremely insightful.

Now as we kick back to enjoy the summer months, it's time to start planning for next September!

### **SERVICE AND STUDY BRANCH – Honey Mostyn and Sylvia Scloznick and Zelda Safer**

Our group has 40 members who meet every two weeks. We just had our closing program with Morton Silverstone who talked about Broadway shows and performed on a keyboard to the delight of everyone. We now have a new slate. Our group continues with a warm bond with each other and we hope that this will continue for many years.

### **SUBURBAN STUDY BRANCH – Sandra Parl and Fran Kirshenbaum**

We currently have 36 members; we meet once a month in the afternoons.

Our program consists of various speakers:

Kathy Tile reviewed “People of the Book”

Heather Kassel reviewed the movie “The Counterfeiters”

Tanya Gruber spoke on people who are wrongly convicted

Gordon Bean presented a musical program

Celia Stroh reviewed “Fault Lines”

Warren Green spoke on the History of Jewish Survival

Rochelle Wilner spoke on Israel at 60, Good, Bad & Future

We also had an outing to the R.O.M. to see the Diamond exhibit.

Our closing luncheon will be June 10<sup>th</sup> with entertainer Mickey Lewin.

### **THORNHILL STUDY BRANCH – Deanna Samuels & Dorothy Miller**

I am pleased to report that our last season of programs and events was very much enjoyed by all our members and our thanks to our Program Committee for putting together such an interesting array of varied and inspiring programs, including a talk by Paula Frisch on Council House activities; Musical Evening with Renee Barda; Needlepoint instruction at Needle Art; Memory Improvement by Baycrest Speaker Dr. Nicole Anderson; March of the Living talk by an actual participant; History of the Jews in Ireland talk; Movie Critic Kevin Courier; Musical Theatre Topic, Irvin Berlin by Gordon Bean; a talk from Pomegranate Society by Ann Valdelman; and a book review by Marilyn Herbert of The Book Thief. We were also pleased to take advantage in participating in and appreciating many of Council House programs throughout the year as well as enjoying our own social occasions such as our Chanukah Party, Closing Dinner and Group Barbeque.

We have continued to take part in various Service Projects for Council, including Drive for Dreidels, Passover Packing Supervision, Reading Angels and Serviettes. We are open to invite two or three new members to our Group.

We recently held a very successful Fundraiser for Council in the form of a Card Day Party at Council House, which was well attended and an enjoyable afternoon was had by all participants with the extra pleasure of some really great door prizes and some amazing raffle prizes donated by a number of local businesses. The mouth watering buffet refreshments made entirely by our own members were eagerly consumed by the guests. It was with great satisfaction to our entire Group that the afternoon went so well and we hope to make this type of Fundraiser an annual event.

We look forward to another successful year.

### **VIOLET DAVIS BRANCH – Bernice Norman & Phyllis Goldberg**

The Violet Davis Study Branch has completed a rewarding 2008/2009 season. We have had several books and play reviews that resulted in lively discussions. Also, several group outings have occurred, namely ones to the Canadian Opera House and to the ROM. We have planned a closing luncheon to a restaurant in Nobleton. Our group continues to participate collectively and individually in many National Council functions.

### **YACHAD BRANCH – Dahlia Rusinek & Sandy Kroll**

Once again, Yachad Branch had a very successful year, balanced with stimulating and varied programs which had something to offer everyone in the group.

The year was bookended by two special women, Jill Presser of the Consent and Capacity Board who, in September, presented on living wills and the role of power of attorney. Police officer Debbie Bodkin, at our very last meeting of the year talked to us about her experiences in Darfur.

The rest of the year was peppered with very interesting meetings which centered on intermarriage, violence against women, the joys and challenges of a woman rabbi, just to name a few.

As always, Yachad Branch very proudly organizes and hosts a Purim Party for the residents of Bathurst Prince Charles. This year, like those preceding, met with resounding success. Mickey Lewin performed and had everyone hopping. The members of Yachad provided the goodies and the Purim story along with songs and dance. We hope to do this again in 2009-2010.

### **YORK MILLS STUDY BRANCH – Evelyn Lent and Molly Rosen**

York Mills Study Group had a very successful year in 2008 – 2009. The attendance at all our meetings was excellent because our Program Committee had worked very hard to provide most interesting programs.

### **ZION BRANCH – Thelma Davis**

Zion Branch continues to meet twice a month to enjoy an eclectic mix of activities. We have joined other Branches, several times, for interesting programs. We, and they, found this successful, enabling us to enjoy speakers which we otherwise might not have been able to afford.

We have just enjoyed a 'drum circle' which, made for a fun evening. We ended the night on real 'high' as Carolyn, our leader and conductor, orchestrated a thunderstorm which we performed and found to be an exhilarating and 'truly awesome' experience.

We intend to finish this year with dinner at a restaurant, although the members of the program committee and those who attend the Genetics committee will meet over the Summer.

We look forward to another exciting year. As a group, Zion Branch is very proud of the high number of our members who take an active role on the Executive, as Portfolio Chairs and on committees at the Toronto Section Level.